2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
FR5 Ngoni FR5

123 brother arranged for first one *isanusi* and then, when he became ill, for another to come and see me. In each case they concluded that I was 791 consulting them and foretold what would happen and gave me advice, warning and assurance. There was great seriousness of purpose and no mountebank atmosphere, even though they came to the courtyard of my hut and saw round them all the paraphernalia of a European's camping equipment.

791 The first diviner, who was of a Venda clan, was a very old man and greatly respected and trusted by the Nzunga clan, who were looking after Bambo Manga in Mcakhatha and who had called him several times to divine for them during her illness. His story was that he was the son of an *isanusi* and when the signs of his initiation began to appear before he reached puberty, his father recognized the fainting and the pain and refusal to eat, and said 'This child will be a diviner also.' The spirit who came to him in dreams was his father's father who had died south of the Zambesi, where his father had been born.

This man was very definite about the kind of situations for which he could and would divine and the type of advice he would give. Questioned further on this point, he gave in this order: sickness, journeys, auspicious days for holding an *ngoma* dance or a hunt, 'absent treatment' of relatives in trouble in the south asked for by letter, sickness of cattle, moving a village to a new site. He refused contemptuously any divining about stealing or death, or agricultural practices such as choosing new gardens or beginning cultivation. Neither he nor the people with him made any specific reference to the different roles of an *isanusi* among the Ngoni and the local Cewa and other tribes, but since they used the same terms for divining, *kuombeza maula* (to throw the lots), they were careful to point out what the Ngoni diviners did *not* do. In the case of sickness due
● [755] to 'spirits troubling', of auspicious days for journeys and other events, of cattle sickness, of moving villages, his invariable advice was to sacrifice a beast to the spirits. Most of the inquiries addressed to him were about sickness. When such an inquiry came to him in his village, he smelled his medicines and asked of *his* ancestral spirit 'Is the man likely to live or not? Who is troubling him? What shall he do?'

787 The first occasion on which I saw him divine was in the hut of a widow of the former chief, Njolomole I, which had been newly swept 791 and a new fire made. The chief and his uncle sat on either side of the fire, the diviner on the right-hand side of the door and I on the left on the woman's side. The diviner was told to begin. He pulled out his *ntibo*, the stem of a gourd, which was wrapped in bark and cloth and had inside it the medicine, and which was waxed at each end. He scraped bits of the *nsiha* root into a pot with a little water in it. He put the *ntibo* in the water for a moment and then took it out and rubbed it in his hands. He put it under a flat food basket and swept his hand over the top of the basket once or twice before putting the pot on top. He gazed

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5 Mpezeni

People regret that
a faithful woman whose husband stays away many years does not bear children, but they do not condone infidelity. The prolonged absence of men which leads to this unsatisfactory situation is seen as part of the disruption of the old order by the coming of the Whites. It is they who are responsible, both for the lack of children in marriages where the woman is faithful and for the occurrence of adultery in marriages where she is not. The virtue of bearing children and the virtue of fidelity are values in conflict and the Ngoni see only one solution, the ending of labour migration. This conflict appears with particular force when a man goes away leaving his wife pregnant. This action is in itself hazardous, for the man will not be there at the time of birth to confess his adultery, yet men do go away knowing their wives are pregnant. If a live child is born, it must be protected by the rite of 'taking up the child'.[19] If this is neglected the child may die, and it is in the interests therefore of the man's relatives as well as the woman's that it should be performed. The only consistent line of action is to ensure that the medicines which can be used as a substitute for the rite are available to the woman. These medicines are expensive, and relatives may be reluctant to find the money for them, particularly as the whole procedure is under the ban of the missions. The only other solution is for the woman to take a lover with whom she performs the rite. If they are caught, the excuse that they were sleeping together merely for 'taking up the child' is not accepted. Here the same conflict and the same attitude are seen as when a woman has an impotent husband.[20] To achieve a desirable end the woman must commit adultery; but woe betide her if she is caught in the act.

There is an important difference between the way in which the kinsfolk act at the level of village discussion and their behaviour later when matters are referred to the court. In the village they are fairly free to act without reference to the absent husband. They can give advice and can attempt to enforce mutually agreed damage payments of chicken, acting in the light of their opinion of what is in their own interest and in the general interest of their kinsman. They cannot deal in this way with divorce or with large damages for adultery. These matters must be referred to the court and here much more deliberate attention is paid to the wishes of the absent man. If a case of adultery is brought by the man's kin, the court enquires about the wishes of the husband in the matter. The husband's kin must produce a letter from him authorizing them to proceed against his wife and he must say in the letter whether he wishes to divorce her or merely to claim damages for adultery. The case is usually adjourned for three to six months while this is done. A woman who pleads for divorce on the ground of her husband's desertion is similarly told to write to him informing him

[19] See above, pp. 45f.
[20] See above, p. 34.

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni
Maravi FR4

to the kin of the married couple however much the kin may intervene in the marriage and act on behalf of the couple.

The belief in the occurrence of such diseases as *mdulo* and *lugola* supports the values of Ngoni society, and acts as a check on behaviour which is wrong in Ngoni eyes. Beliefs in the efficacy of medicines do not have such a straightforward moral connotation, for in theory it is as easy for a man to harm the wife of someone else by the use of medicines, or for a woman to harm her co-wife, as it is for a man to harm his cuckold. Medicines can, therefore, be used for good or ill, depending on the intentions of those who manipulate them. Even the possibility of anti-social manipulation of medicines can, however, have a positive effect, as we have seen in the way in which a wife is encouraged to live demurely without attracting the attention of other men, lest when she spurns their advances they retaliate with medicines to harm her in childbirth. Old people like to maintain that in 'the time of peace' the Ngoni did not use medicines at all, although from what we know of the Zulu and other South-Eastern Bantu tribes from which the Ngoni came, this is almost certainly untrue. 'Our spears were our medicines', they say, meaning that when the state was powerful both internally and in relation to their neighbours, law and order and the wishes of the Paramount Chief could be enforced by physical sanctions. Only now, when the chieftainship has lost so much of its former power and men and women can do wrong without fear of punishment in the courts, is it necessary to fall back on mystical processes in an attempt to control other people's behaviour. By contrast the mystical diseases which can only be caught through socially disapproved actions operated at both stages of Ngoni history, although *mdulo* itself, unlike *lugola* and other similar conditions, appears to have been introduced by the Cewa.[5]

To a lesser extent the fear of venereal disease may be said to act as a stabilizing factor, since men admit that they are cautious in running after women on farms, in Fort Jameson and away in the big towns, because they fear syphilis. In the village an infected woman, if she cannot conceal her condition, is shunned by careful men, and a newcomer to the village who starts to flirt with her may be taken aside by an older man and warned of the risk of infection. It is an actionable offence for one partner in a marriage to transmit venereal disease to the other. Venereal disease is, however, commonly believed to be widespread and the fear of it cannot be said to be an efficient deterrent of adultery.

Despite the mystical safeguards and despite the fairly well defined rights *in uxorem*, marriage is not regarded as a permanent bond. There is a maxim 'Never confide in your wife, for tomorrow you may divorce her.' Consanguinity is permanent and unchangeable and a man should confide in a brother rather than in his wife. The

[5] Cf. Read, op. cit. 'The moral code . . .', p. 7.

6:Rattray E, G-5 (ca. 1900) 1907 FR5 Ngoni FR5

X

THE LOTS

753 791 I. If a man be ill, his companion goes off and seeks the oracle man. He comes outside his hut and hails him, "Zikomo." The owner says, "Yes, come in here." And the man enters the hut, and says, "We have come to you that you may trace a spirit for us." Then the man takes out his lots from a little cat's-skin bag, and takes some ashes and rubs the lots with them, and begins to consult them, and says, "Are you nursing some sick person?" And he replies, "Yes, indeed, I have been attending on a sick person; the little thing that is ill is a child, and I cannot get sleep for him (lit. with him), and he will not even eat gruel, and I said, 'But I must go to the oracle man; perhaps there he may follow up for me the spirit which is causing the child to be ill.'" Then he begins to consult the lots, and says, "It is the spirit of the child's grandmother; it is she who is causing the child to be ill." And he who has come to consult the lots replies, "I have heard." And the lots again speak (through the man): "Why do you not keep me in mind, and even my grandchild, you also go without calling me to mind," but if you give the spirit a fowl take it from me, the child is sitting up; when you go and take the fowl, kneel down with it, and say, "Grandmother, there is the fowl on account of which you are taking a life" (*muntu*). Then the man who has come from the road (to consult the lots) says, "Put the spirit of mine back in the bag."

782 ● 755 II. Then he goes home, and takes his fowl, and kneels down with it, and takes a gourd-cup of water,

6:Rattray E,G-5 (ca. 1900) 1907 FR5 Ngoni FR5

and fills his mouth, and blows the water out in a spray, and says, "Grandmother, there is the fowl for which you are causing a person to be ill; you harden your heart all for the sake of a fowl; go, let your little child alone, that he also shall walk about like his companions do; you must not see fit to take a man, only for the sake of a fowl." Then he takes the fowl and kills it, and plucks it, and cleans it; he roasts the liver, and places it at that side of the hut where his head is towards when he sleeps. When the fowl is cooked, he makes some porridge and dishes it out in little baskets, leaving some in the pot, and commences the propitiation of the spirit, saying, "Here is the fowl we have killed for you; eat of it together, let there not be one who refuses. And there is your portion also, little children; you must eat together and rejoice." And he takes the pot, and says, "And this is yours, old women." And when he has finished propitiating, he takes the porridge and puts it at "the head" of the hut, so that he can eat what is left on the morrow, and then he begins to divide out the food to the people, saying, "You, there is your portion; and you, also, there is yours, and this is yours, old women." And when they have finished eating they clap their hands and sound the *ntungululu*, and then disperse. Next morning, at dawn, they take what they had put at the head, and eat it.

6:Rattray E, G-5 (ca. 1900) 1907 FR5 Ngoni FR5

XXVI

THE KANONOMERA DANCE

If a person is ill, they go and consult the lots, and then he of the lots says, "It is the spirit of his grandmother, it is wanting a dance; when you dance that dance, you can take it from us the child is sitting up." And they go to the village and take a basket of grain, and with it they address the spirit, saying, "There is the grain for which you are killing a person; when we have made beer, let us see the person (who is ill) sitting up." And then they assemble every one, and the day the beer is strained, they all come together, and that evening they enter the hut (where the sick person is), and begin to clap their hands to rouse the spirit, and then they see the sick one is trembling and crying out, and then the people say (to the spirit), "You must not come with war, it is we who have called you; see here at the village the drums have come, but let them depart again without anything happening to mar the dance." And when they have finished clapping their hands the dance comes forth, and the drums begin to sound, and they are dancing. He who remembers a song sings it; when one is possessed by a spirit, down he falls, and they drag him out of the dance, and deck him with calico and skins of animals, and he again enters the circle and dances. When a person is possessed by a child's spirit, they bind his calico tightly round him that it be strong, because that person is wishing to strip it off, and dance naked, as a child does not wear anything. Should a woman be seized by a man's spirit, saying, "I am so and so," they deck her with a

6:Rattray E, G-5 (ca. 1900) 1907 FR5 Ngoni FR5

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feather head-dress, and in her hand she holds a little stick (for a spear), and her calico is tied round her waist, and her breasts swing free. The songs they sing at the Kanonomera dance go thus—

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What knocks off the dew,
Comes at the early dawn.—(*Repeat.*)

Looking, gazing, we just gaze one at the other.
(*Repeat.*)

When the drum sounds it is the *choinjoli* drum
that brings the spirit.—(*Repeat.*)

Far away there, far away,
Far away there, far away,
Far away where shines white that little cloud,
Far away there, is my bow.

Little quail, little quail, you are picking up the
little grains.
And what if he is,
Are they not his eyes?
It broke his leg for him;
Only hunger, only hunger.

Oh no, indeed, indeed,
Two wives have been too many for him indeed;
Two wives have been too many for him indeed.

You hate me,
You hate me for my being so old.—(*Repeat.*)

6:Rattray E,G-5 (ca. 1900) 1907 FR5 Ngoni FR5

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Little maiden, whom war has given me,
Should you refuse to be mine,
I am as a slave in my grief,
And then what must you do?

We were far away;
Our companions had cut off their head rings.

XXVII

THE NTETEREZI DANCE

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It is danced only at a funeral.

Scrape out the beer pot and give me.
Have some sense, the beer is finished.

He is the husband who favours your companion (*i.e.* his second wife),
And you, you only cook and give him, all in silence;
And here you return,
And weep against the hut post.

Should you be a childless man,
Do not be hitting your neighbour's child,
That's so, father.
Don't you think you should go and beat that maize you planted?
That's so, father.

7: Hodgson G-5 (1926) 1933 FR5 Ngoni FR5

within about four months of purchase, the money is refunded, unless it is shown that the owner is to blame. In the case of a sheep or goat, this period is reduced to about six weeks. 233 [672]

It is not the custom to hire out cattle, either for ploughing, or for milk. If a cow brings forth twin calves together, she and her offspring are presented to the headman, as the cow is supposed to be an exceptionally good one; and the headman in return hands over three other animals of similar ages. [427] [431]

V.—Social Organization: Military.

1. *Preparations for War.*

The Ngoni expeditions against the Achewa consisted principally of raids at times when the crops were ripening and they were short of food. At such times the young warriors who thirsted for war signified their desire by dancing outside the house of the chief. After they had danced for three evenings, the chief fixed a day, food was prepared, and warriors were summoned from the neighbouring villages. The *sing'anga* made medicine to protect them against the weapons of their enemies, and as the army filed past him, he dipped a hammer into the medicine; and struck each man on the chest with it. The best-known *sing'anga* under Chief Chiwere was Chimongo, and his name is still held in veneration. 721 726 756

2. *Methods.*

The Angoni usually came upon their foe unawares, and attacked with a rush. If they met with a stout resistance from a stockaded village, they surrounded it and camped till lack of water forced the besieged to sally forth. Quarter was rarely given to the men. 726

3. *Subsequent Proceedings.*

On their return, all who had killed a man repaired immediately to the *sing'anga* who mixed medicine with goats' milk. The warriors dipped their fingers in the mixture and put them into their mouths. Then they dipped again into the mixture, and rubbed it on their arms and legs, after which they stood up and shouted "O-o-o!" This form of purification was undergone in order to drive away the *chisanda* or affliction which they would otherwise suffer from the spirits of their dead enemies, and until they were cleansed they might not have any connexion with women. Next day, they burned goats' bones, pounded them and mixed them in water, smearing the mixture first on cheeks and throat and then over the remainder of their persons. After this they proceeded to their homes and, having decorated themselves, displayed their reasonable pride by jumping about before the chief, who sent for a bull to be cooked and eaten. Prisoners were paraded, and when a man had taken three or more, one of them was always returned to him by the chief. 727 [783] [755]